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To help gifted children gain sound education in the humanities, the social sciences, the natural sciences, and in mathematics, a program was developed for eighteen sixth graders. The class differed from other sixth grade classes in the way it used materials.

Pilot programs were set up to acquaint the teachers of program development with the identification, guidance, testing, methods, and materials that were effective in working with these students.

The criteria for selecting students included records of previous tests, IQ score above 120, achievement two years or above median, and recommendations of former teachers.

The teacher should show creativeness and spontaniety: she should understand the unity and relatedness of knowledge, and the fundamentals of reading, writing, and arithmetic. She should be concerned for the social and recreational experiences of the children.

In general the method used should correlate social studies, literature, music, art, creative writing, and oral expression. Students selected problems that they wanted to know more about, using inductive and deductive reasoning. Individual study as well as student-teacher planning was used.

Effective learning environment emphasized flexible grouping, instructional resources, classroom arrangement, and the children's educational activities.

Success was shown in higher marks on achievement tests and in the parent's favorable reactions.

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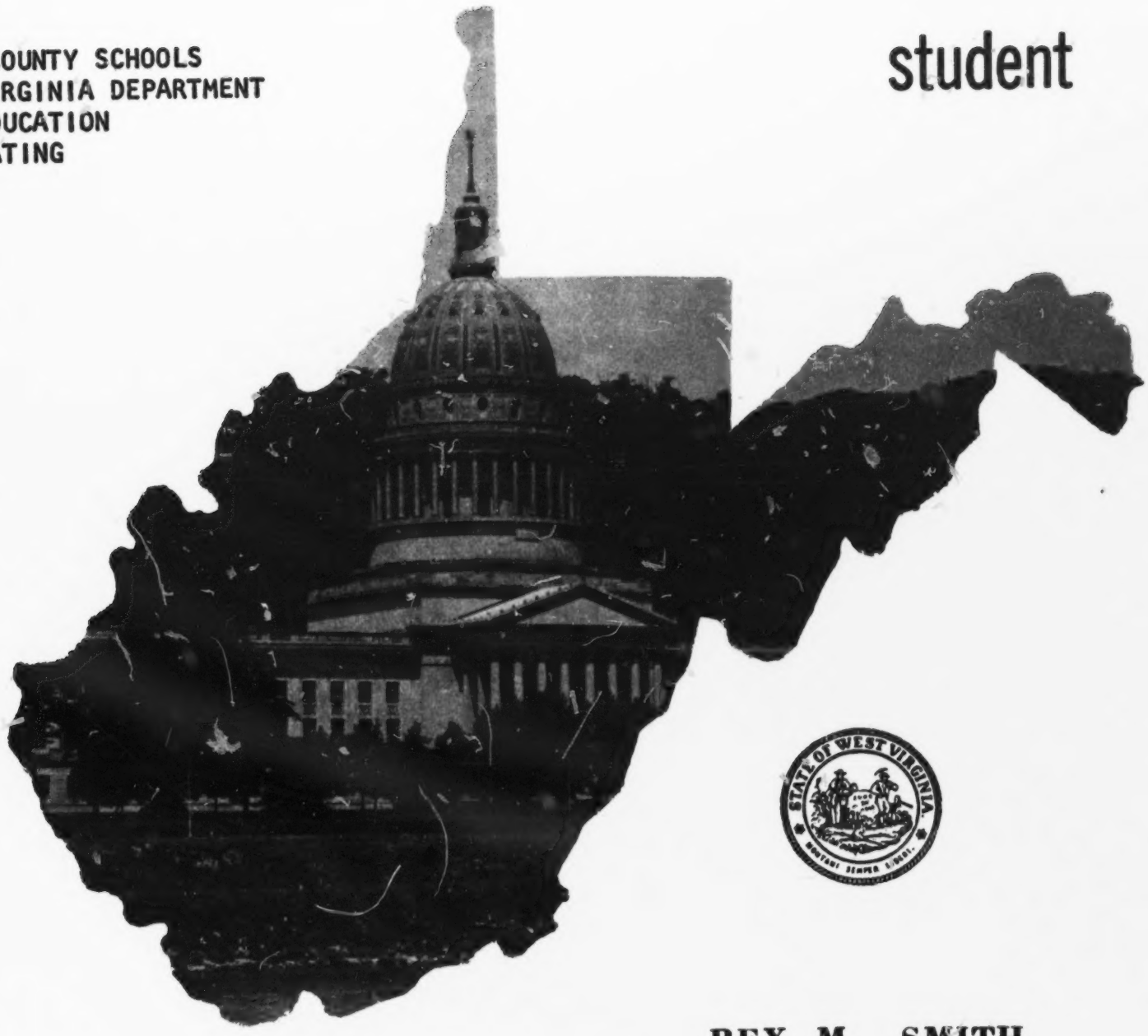
SUMMARY OF

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND RESEARCH

on the academically talented student

MASON COUNTY SCHOOLS
WEST VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT
OF EDUCATION
COOPERATING



REX M. SMITH

State Superintendent of Free Schools

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THE MASON COUNTY - MARSHALL UNIVERSITY PROJECT
WEST VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, COOPERATING

MASON COUNTY PILOT CLASS FOR THE GIFTED AND ACADEMICALLY ABLE STUDENTS

ORDNANCE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Point Pleasant, West Virginia

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Teacher - Mabel Costen

Special Consultants

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Evelyn Murray - State Department of Education, Educational Consultant for the Gifted

State Department of Education Committee for the Gifted

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Clarence A. Brock - Supervisor, Secondary Schools
Paul Brannon - Supervisor, Guidance, Counseling and Testing
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A POINT OF VIEW ABOUT THE GIFTED

Furnishing appropriate education for the gifted is not an option which school personnel can take up or drop according to the pressures of the moment.

The nation has resources for accommodating the talented without short changing other students. The issue is not whether schools should make provisions for the Gifted and Academically Able, but what kind of programs will result in the greatest talent yield.

There are several crucial aspects of the educational process to which program planners must give attention in providing adequately for the gifted.

Gifted children must be provided with a sound education in the humanities, the social sciences, the natural sciences, and in mathematics. These learning experiences will lead to acquisition of both knowledge and method of particular disciplines.

Their unusual abilities to think critically, to build meanings and concepts, to establish relationships, to do creative thinking, and work in problem-solving situations must be cultivated. Self-direction, independence, a desire to explore, invent, plan, and try out things should be fostered together with a love of learning for its intrinsic rewards.

The gifted must be given advance understanding of the amount and kind of training necessary to develop their talents. They need to realize their potential at an early age and have experiences that are commensurate with their potential.

A basic purpose of our society is to help each individual realize the fullest development of his potential. The school is the chief means by which this purpose can be obtained. To achieve this goal, individual differences must be recognized and provisions made to nurture these varying potentialities.

Meeting individual needs is a challenge. Special provision must be made. The school believes that provision should made for those students of high potential and special abilities who perform well in academic areas as well as those students who have special talents. Summarily, one facet of the total educational program is aimed at meeting the needs of gifted children.

John T. St. Clair
Assistant State Superintendent of Schools
Division of Instruction

FOREWORD

During the year 1960-61 West Virginia participated in a leadership training project designed by the Southern Regional Education Board to provide essential competency in all major aspects of education for bright and talented youth, for State Department of Education personnel. As a result of this participation, a special committee of the Instructional Staff of the West Virginia Department of Education prepared a five-year State plan and published the West Virginia Program for Gifted and Academically Able Students. This first publication has received wide acclaim both from within the schools of West Virginia and nationally.

It naturally followed that a pilot class should be established in order that the provisions of the State plan could be tested and evaluated in a local school setting. The results of this endeavor were to serve as a prototype for other communities. Mason County asked that such a class be established in their school system. This publication is a report on that class, the first self-contained class for academically able students in West Virginia.

Efforts by a school to develop and operate programs for the gifted must involve all who are concerned with it, including pupils, parents, the community, organizations and agencies within the community, and the system-wide school staff. Programs in communities that present a solid front in planning, structure, and objectives of educating their gifted are more effective than those programs in which the curriculum is planned and executed by a limited number of school personnel.

We have tried to cover all facets of the Mason County program as it affected the students, the regular school curriculum, the school system, and the community. I hope that school administrators and the readers of this publication will become sufficiently motivated to make further inquiries, and to promote additional educational opportunities for the gifted and academically able students within their communities.

Dr. Roger Elser
Director of Special Education
Division of Instruction

HOW THE CLASS DIFFERED FROM THE AVERAGE SIXTH GRADE CLASS

The logic for special education for the gifted is based on the following general principles and observable facts as listed by Ward.[1]

1. Gifted children as a group differ from others in learning ability; they learn faster and remember more, and they tend to think more deeply with and about what they think.

2. As adults, gifted persons tend to remain similarly advanced beyond the average and tend to assume distinctive social roles as leaders in the reconstruction and advancement of whatever lines of activity they engage in.

3. The regular school curriculum only barely approximates the demand of either the greater learning capacity or the anticipated social roles of gifted persons.

4. An educational program can be devised which does more adequately meet their basic demands, and which on the whole being uniquely suited to the gifted is both unnecessary for and impossible of accomplishment by students of lesser ability.

5. Differentiated educational provisions for the gifted promise to discover more gifted persons, to improve their education, and to launch them earlier into their chosen careers so that society, as well as the persons themselves, may enjoy longer the fruits of their productive and creative labors.

The fact that the regular classroom does not meet the more important needs of the gifted can again scarcely be denied. What does the regular classroom have to offer the nine year old who reads on a seventh grade level?

The problem for the teacher and the consultants of this sixth grade class was to carve out a sequence of experiences extending over a full range of school years and carrying into every major field of knowledge that could be purposefully represented in the school curriculum. These experiences were pointed toward differential education for the able students which were developmental experiences geared specifically to the stable ability of these students and their varied interests. It is impossible for a teacher to collect materials, guide the learning experiences appropriate for these students in the regular classroom, and to give them the personal guidance needed.

This class differed from the average in the way the students used materials. The media served as a motivation technique, as a means of finding the answer to their problems, or as an extension of their learning experiences.

[1]The Southern Regional Project for Education for the Gifted, Southern Regional Board, Atlanta, Georgia, 1962.

This class differs from the average in size. Because of the nature of the learning differences that distinguish gifted persons from persons of the generality, and to the kind of careers toward which these differences tend to lead, it is impossible for a teacher to coordinate, unify, and give proper guidance to a large group of able students.

The organizational procedure was different from that of the average class because of the nature of the learning ability of the students. The daily schedule was flexible enough to allow for long periods of time for some subjects: group discussions, individualized instruction, committee work, project activities, and community work.

The learning experiences included those of the average students in basic skills and content areas. These learning experiences differed in the acceleration of materials as they were able to learn at a faster rate. They differed in the kind and quality of material that they were able to use for depth learning. They differed in the way in which they were able to work in problem-solving situations which freed them to think, plan, discover, experiment and to create.

INVOLVEMENT OF THE PROGRAM FOR THE GIFTED

The Mason County project for the gifted and academically able began with the organization of the committee for the Gifted and Academically Able students in the State Department of Education.

Pilot programs were set up in the State to acquaint the teachers of program development with the identification, guidance, testing, methods, and materials that are effective in working with these students.

One of the pilot programs of the State was a sixth grade class set up in the fall of 1961 at Ordnance School in Mason County under the supervision of the State Department of Education in the Division of Instruction under the Special Education Program.

Several meetings were held by the principals, supervisors, and administrators from both the State and County levels to discuss plans and problems that might arise in developing programs for the Gifted and Able students.

After much discussion, it was decided by the group that the pilot class should be a sixth grade group of students including those with outstanding ability in Pt. Pleasant and the surrounding area.

Records of test scores from all schools in the Pt. Pleasant area were studied. Both achievement and mental ability were considered. Former teachers were consulted for advice. From the above procedures, thirty-four students were selected from four of these schools to be tested by certified psychologists.

The Criteria for Selecting Students

1. To use the records of previous tests
2. I. Q. score above 120
3. Achievement two years or above battery median
4. Achievement in reading two years or above grade level
5. Recommendations of former teachers as to visual, emotional and physically adjustment

On October 19, 1961, four psychologists, under the direction of Dr. Alex Darbes from Marshall University administered the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for screening the students to be selected for the class. From the results of the tests and the criteria for selection, as listed above, eighteen students were invited to participate in the class, all having met the above criteria for selection.

The parents were consulted concerning their child's selection and inclusion in the program by the County Superintendent. Plans for the class were explained followed by a discussion with the principal, the teacher, parents, and county consultants. They agreed to organize the class November 20, 1961.

The teacher, who had been carefully selected to teach the pilot class had been properly oriented from the very beginning in program development, guidance, methods and media to use with this group of students. The teacher was also given a week of free time to order materials, consult with State Department specialists, to observe an out-of-state class for the gifted, and to get her classroom in order for the new pilot class.

The teacher and the eighteen students met November 20, 1961 for the first session. This was not only history in this new educational endeavor in West Virginia, but it was the first time that this group of students had ever met eighteen other students who were able to think in depth as they were able to do. This brought about some problems, but adjustments were soon made by all concerned.

A major part of the project was the development of attitudes toward the gifted. This included numerous meetings with the teacher, parents, and the principals from the different schools explaining the need for the development of the gifts of children and the development of responsibility within the children themselves. The parents were included in the planning from the beginning. No pressure was placed upon them to have their children in the program.

The plans with the parents and their reaction to the program was highly favorable from the beginning and it continued throughout the year.

THE TEACHER

The teacher's friendly, cooperative, understanding approach to the children seemed to put them at ease and to invite an active, thoughtful attitude toward the work to be accomplished.

Creativeness and spontanity marked the teaching. New problems were sought for children to explore. New ways to express themselves were encouraged. The children were free to think, to plan, and to act. The teacher was there as a helper and as a co-worker in assisting pupils in finding answers for their many problems.

The teacher understood the unity or relatedness of knowledge. She crossed boundary lines in content areas. She encouraged the flow of one subject matter into another. Social studies, literature, art and music were often correlated for depth of learning.

Academic fundamentals of reading, writing, and arithmetic were stressed to meet the individual needs of children. Skill development varied among the children, and individual folders were kept in a file for self-evaluation of these skills.

The teacher showed concern for the social and recreational experiences of the children. They were taught to knit, sew, play chess, sing and do creative dances. They participated in social and community experiences which enabled the children to live effectively and happily in the life around them.

The teacher and students examine the heart of a calf while studying the human body

TEACHER - PUPIL PLANNING FOR THE CLASS

The teacher and pupils were given freedom to plan and encouragement to pursue whatever course of action they believed to be most productive. Also they learned to accept the responsibility for their actions which this freedom afforded them.

Many teacher-student discussion periods were planned. A number of interesting units of study were considered. The topics decided upon were built around problem areas of social and personal interests and needs of the students. They were oriented in the types of references, new media and methods of teaching that would be used. These students were quick to grasp the idea and cooperated in every classroom learning experience to make their class successful.

These students had not been in a learning situation before which provided for independent thinking and individualized instruction. Some time was devoted to the discussion of how to work independently in small groups as well as in classroom situations. The students were given more freedom, but along with this freedom came responsibility.

Since these students were to do more independent study and research work, they were taken to the Pt. Pleasant High School Library. Here they were taught how to use the library, select materials, use the card catalogue, and the Dewey Decimal System.

This study was followed by the teacher discussing with them the techniques for doing research: how to study, to outline, to use reference books, maps, globes, and charts. They were also given experiences in learning how to organize, summarize, and generalize.

The problem areas for study were developed around problem centered situations. Creativity was the key word for freedom of expression in all areas of study. Critical thinking along with analytical reasoning was stressed in discussions and reporting.

In planning the work the fundamental skills were not neglected, although they were presented as a part of their group and individual experiences. The skills were always developed in a meaningful and functional way.

METHODS AND CONTENT

The broad-unit method was used correlating social studies, literature, music, art, creative written, and oral expression. These units selected by the teacher and pupils were those that would correlate the above content areas in a period of time in history. These learning experiences were always related to present day experiences.

Students selected questions or problems of concern that they wished to know more about. They found research on the questions chosen for study. They used a variety of references which often included the community for gathering information and preparing the reports. Their standards were worked out by the class for presenting reports. The class also evaluated the reports as to interest, content, and presentation.

The exact sciences - mathematics and science were individualized according to interest in science and achievement in mathematics.

The mathematics was a shift away from group instruction to individual instruction. The emphasis was from teaching mathematics as a way of doing something to teaching it as a way of thinking. Each student was encouraged to progress at his own rate of speed. Mathematical concepts were made more meaningful, more precise, and more exciting to the student. The major emphasis was on the understanding of basic mathematical ideas which are sometimes hidden within computational techniques. Computation was taught after the student understood the underlying mathematical ideas.

Each student made use of inductive and deductive reasoning as he progressed from intuitive learning to basic information, and an understanding of more abstract concepts. The discovery approach to learning was employed; the student was given the opportunity to discover mathematical ideas for himself.

The science program consisted of individual projects. The first project on, "The Human Body," was developed by the entire class. The students developed this study in depth. (A very successful civic project on the March of Dimes Drive was developed from this study).

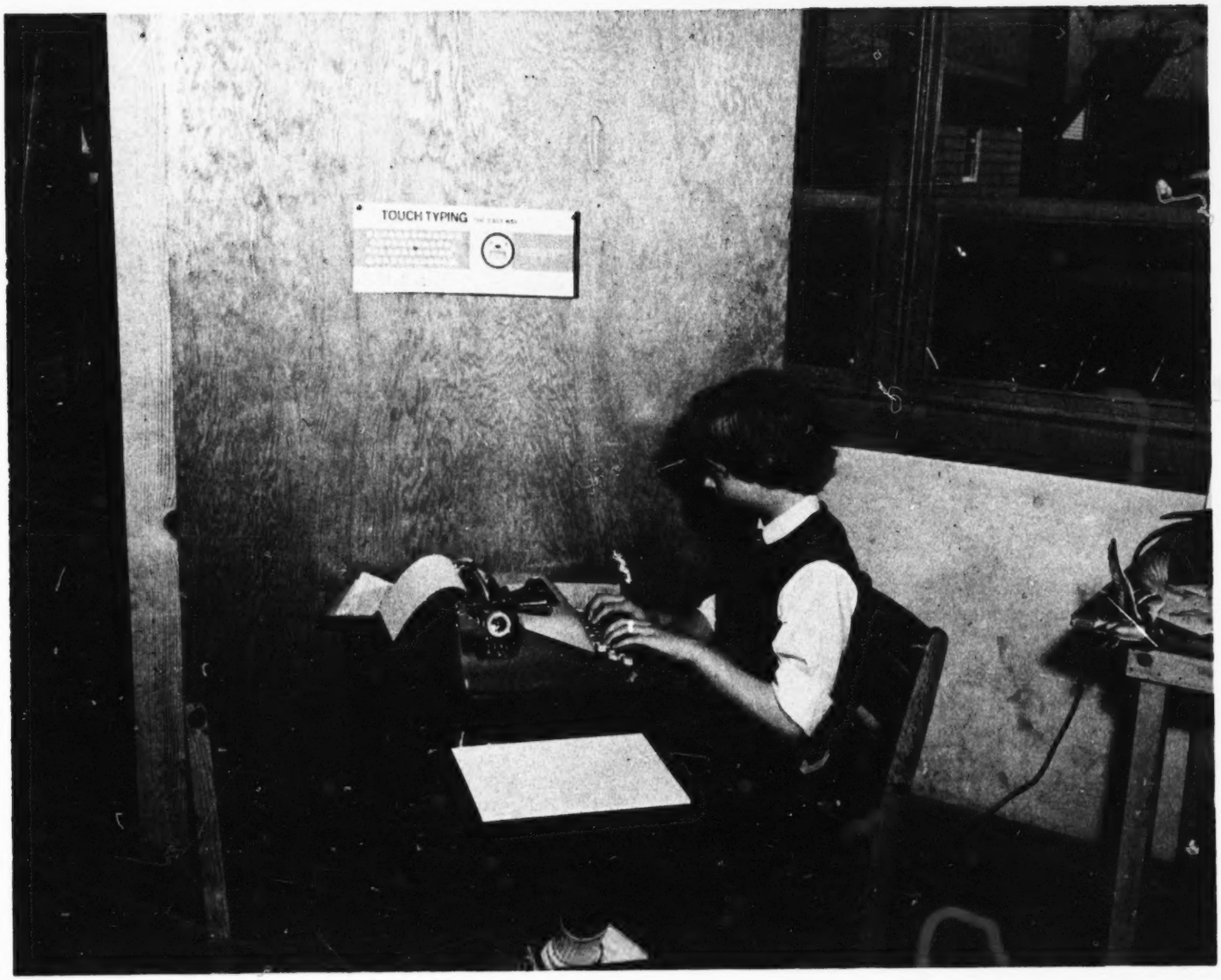
After this group project had been completed and the students felt at ease working in problem solving situations, the students were free to select their own individual science projects. They became an authority in the group on that subject. Research and wide reading was done by all members of the class before the individual projects were presented. This was done in order for all to have an understanding of the content as well as to be able to discuss and ask questions intelligently.

The creative arts - music, art, and speech were correlated in the broad unit period along with the history, religion, and literature. This integration increased understanding and gave depth to meaning. They studied great art composers, illustrated pictures, sketched designs, and made objects to illustrate their projects. They composed verse, musical selections, listened to recordings, played the piano, the auto harp, and other instruments to enrich and deepen their appreciation and enjoyment of the fine arts.

These students did like to work, study, create, invent, explore and think, but the teacher remembered while planning their learning experiences with them that they were first boys and girls. They liked to play when worthwhile activities were organized and provided for them.

During their quiet periods they learned to knit and make sweaters and scarfs. They learned some challenging quiet games which included chess. Many worthwhile active games were planned which consisted of folk dances, rhythms, competitive games, social parties and picnics. The units in health on the body and proper diet supplemented their health program.

Typing was taught these students. They were given the opportunity to learn to type by the touch system. They used this skill in their class work in outlining reports, writing notes, letters, announcements, labels and book reports.

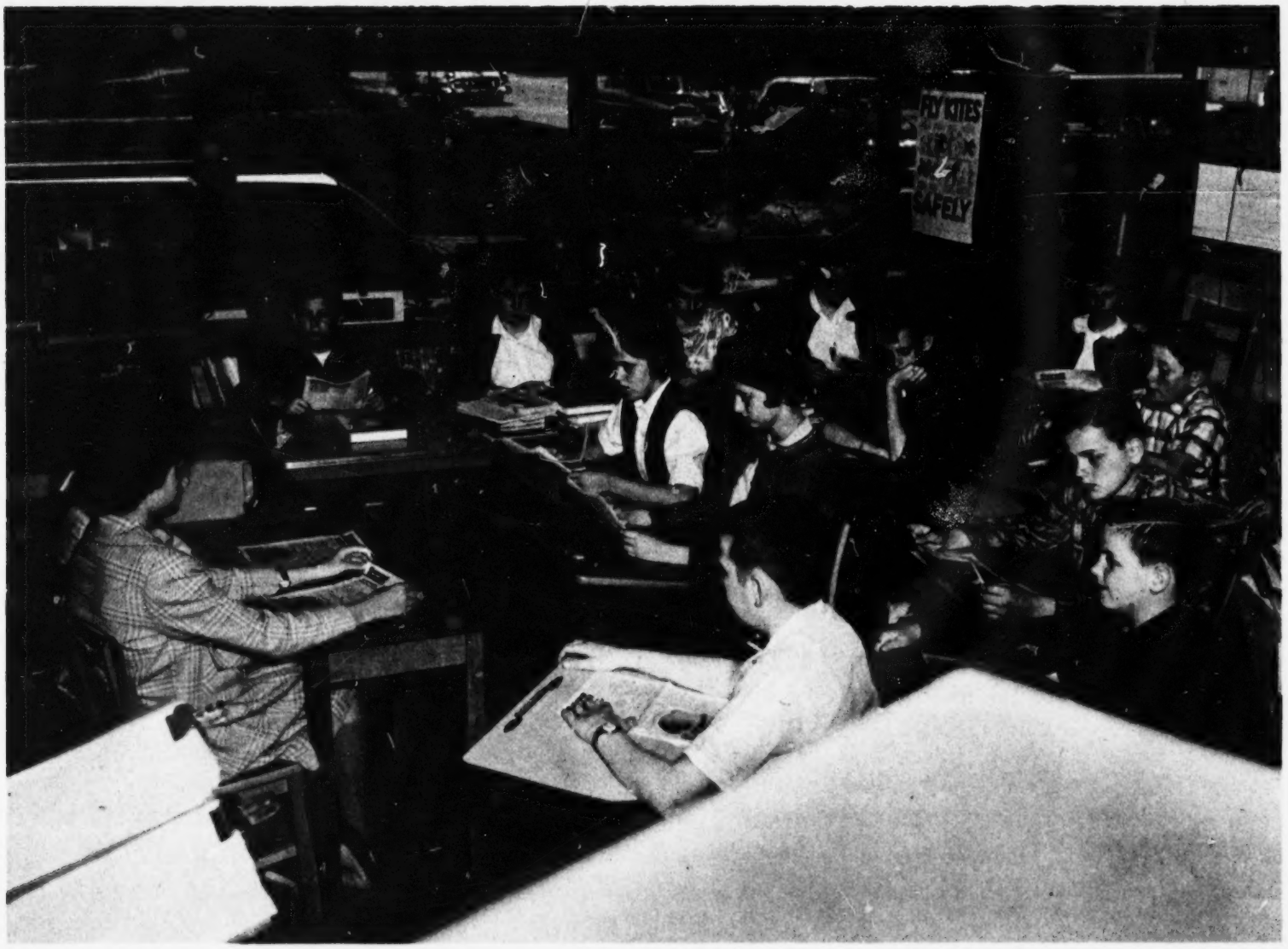


The students learn to type by the touch method.

EFFECTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

In this sixth grade classroom the children were kept busy with ideas they believed to be important. They were actually doing research to the best of their ability. They were finding out, singly or in groups, all they could about some interest or topic, often a self-assigned one. They prepared reports and reported to others in challenging, interesting, commanding ways what they had found out. They decided with the teacher what the next steps were to be taken, "today or tomorrow". They were pursuing individual improvement in the use of fundamental academic skills and abilities. They learned to read better, to improve their powers of communication, and to improve their use of mathematics. They produced plays that they had written; prepared exhibits and fixed bulletin boards; carried out experiments in science and conservation.

The flexible grouping, the instructional resources, the classroom arrangement, and the children's educational activities appeared to create intellectual excitement.



The students met in a seminar to discuss world problems and current issues.

INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES

The material for the group was selected with the nature of the gifted student in mind. Instructional resources included: varied science equipment for individual science projects. Reading material included varied texts of many levels, classics, poetry books, reference books, state and national newspapers, and magazines. Creative media, such as paints, crafts, musical instruments, and recordings were on hand to supplement and deepen the learning experiences. Specialists were available to supplement what the teacher and pupils were unable to do for themselves. For example, a Senator came to explain to them how an idea can become a law. The children in turn went to the legislature and watched the idea become a law. The community was open to them as a laboratory for learning and doing. They not only gave talks, helped with individual projects, but donated specialized equipment. This group included the following persons: senators, engineers, chemists, doctors, editors, librarians, foreign visitors, seamstresses, and business men.

A report on an individualized project

A panel discussion on India

A student explains how the heart works

EVALUATION

How well did the pilot class achieve its objectives? This would be difficult to evaluate in one year. These students were given standardized, achievement, diagnostic, readiness and ability tests. Related data were obtained from a questionnaire to students and conferences and reports from parents. Ideals, social and personal attitudes, habits, likes and dislikes, ethical and esthetic discernment, are also of concern in the evaluation of any educational program. Little more than opinions, unfortunately, are available in this broad area of the development of boys and girls. On the pupils report forms, teachers and consultants have given higher estimates in responsibility, initiative, co-operation, work habits, consideration of others, and health habits than is usually found for sixth graders.

Finally both the usefulness of the class in the teacher education project of the Mason County Marshall University - State Department, and as an administrative plan for meeting the special educational needs of gifted students, have been endorsed by the staff of the school, the County Board of Education and by the West Virginia State Department of Education. The County Board has approved the continuation of the class.

WHAT PROGRESS DID THE CLASS MAKE AS MEASURED BY STANDARDIZED TESTS

When the class entered the Ordnance School Project at the beginning of grade 6, they had a median I. Q. as measured by the WISC of 121. The range of intelligence within the class as measured by the same instrument was from 117 to 135.

At the end of grade 5 the 18 members of the class had been administered the Stanford Achievement Battery, which yields nine sub-scores and a battery median. On the nine sub-tests mean scores ranged from a low of 6.7 on arithmetic computation to a high of 8.9 on language. The battery mean for the entire class was 8.1. These scores were indicative of the achievement level of the group as they entered the project.

At the end of the project year the 18 members of the class were administered a different form of the Stanford Achievement Battery. Class means ranged from a low of 8.8 on arithmetic computation to a high of 11.0 on the language sub-test. The battery mean for the entire class at the end of the project was 9.9.

Comparisons were made to see how class "actual achievement" compared with the "expected achievement" for a group of students having the measured abilities of these 18 youngsters. On each of the sub-tests the actual class mean exceeded the expected class mean. Only one student in the entire class scored below grade level on any of the sub-tests. This was on the science test.

STUDENT EVALUATION

The following questionnaire was given the eighteen students. The statements that were answered more frequently are given below.

I. Activities of the pilot class that I liked best

	No. by Rank
Resource Persons and Field Trips	15
Study of Literature and History Together	12
Individual Projects	12
Typing	12

II. This is how I benefited from the class most

	No. by Rank
Science Projects	17
Trip to the Library	15
Independence Given Us	15
Learning to do research on our own	14
Given more responsibility	13

III. If we were to start the class again as we did last fall, this is what I would change

	No. by Rank
Study deeper into subject	12
More music	11
More advanced work	11
Deeper science study	11
Foreign Languages	5

IV. Next year I want my accelerated class to offer me

	No. by Rank
Latin or another foreign language	7
Advanced mathematics	7
More free time on our own	5
Study advanced subjects	5

V. Materials that I think that we should add to those we have for next year's class

	No. by Rank
Another tape recorder	9
Better maps of the world	7
More handcraft material	7
Books on foreign language	7
More science materials for chemistry	7
Books on archaeology and anthropology	5

PARENT EVALUATION

The parents were involved and shared in the project from the very beginning. They were a part of the implementation and evaluation. Some statements from twelve parents in written communication are listed below:

"We like the type of report you sent to us."

"Delighted with progress."

"My son is liking school for the first time."

"Hope this class continues."

"My son shows much more interest in school."

"What a difference school means to my child."

"This self-motivation is excellent. I hope it continues."

"The freedom to study, choose, and evaluate their own work has made a big difference in my son's attitude toward school."

"The individual projects have caused my daughter to use references and search for information more than I ever expected she could do."

"My daughter has a new awakening toward her responsibility to the school, home, and community."

"It is surprising to see the difference in how my daughter studies. She seems to be much more mature in attacking her assigned work and individual projects."

"The stress you have put on recreation and play is appreciated."

SUMMARY

The examples in this report show some of the possibilities for stretching the school experiences to meet the capacities of the more able students. Both teachers and students are hampered in their efforts to achieve unless the entire school system supports the program.

As indicated from this report the administration, principals, teachers and students were an integral part of the planning, implementation and evaluation from the beginning.

The data from tests, pupil and parent questionnaires seems to indicate that the program was a success.

Observations from administration, the teachers and consultants indicated a desire to continue the program for the Able students at Ordnance School.

FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

Public schools are more and more recognizing the existing need for special training for students of exceptional intelligence. Many of the students in our public schools are endowed with well above average intelligence and of these a small proportion are extremely gifted. Estimates indicate that many never realize their full potential. Much needs to be known about how to utilize factors that seem to be related to full development of gifted youth.

There still remains an urgent need for trained teachers and both research and information adequate to guide these programs. This project has contributed to the program, and should be a challenge for other school systems to invest in the future leaders of the state and nation.

IMPLICATION FOR ADMINISTRATIVE OUTLOOK AND ACTION

1. Help identify individual talent
2. Help program and develop the curriculum
3. Help teachers through in-service education to work with able students
4. Help orient the public to the program
5. To coordinate the learning experiences
6. To continue to evaluate the child's experiences

IMPLICATIONS FOR LEARNING EXPERIENCES FOR THE GIFTED STUDENTS

1. Experiences that provide for social leadership

2. Experiences that allow children to achieve the goals set by themselves and members of the group

3. Learns skills which are developed as the learner seeks and finds information

4. Situations which invite exploring, experimenting, searching, trying out, going beyond the present, projecting into the future, thinking, relating, and judging

Real advantages have accrued to these children in this class, and more will come to others as efforts are made to see that each child develops to his potential.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE TEACHER IN WORKING WITH THE GIFTED

1. To understand the nature of the learning ability of the able students

2. To know how to use the content in a meaningful and challenging way

3. To know how to develop group and individual instruction in all areas of the curriculum

4. To know the subject matter well enough to the point where interrelationships are clarified and integrated

5. To become sensitive to ways of keeping creative thinking alive

6. To provide opportunities for children to work in problem solving situations

7. To provide material extending learning experiences in depth

****

"Let early education be sort of amusement, you will then be better able to find out the natural bent."

Plato

APPENDIX

REPORTING PROGRESS

Most of the reporting to parents was done through parent conferences. A check list was used to supplement the conference which evaluated three areas of the work - personal traits, work habits, and subject matter evaluation. (See diagram of the report as illustrated below.)

CHILD'S NAME_____

ATTENDANCE 1. Days Present
2. Days Absent

PERSONAL TRAITS

	High	Normal	Low
Cooperation			
Emotional stability			
Courtesy			
Respects authority and rules			
Leadership			
Respects personal and public property			
Dependability			
Attitude toward other children			
Initiative			

WORK HABITS

Listens carefully			
Thinks well			
Follows directions well			
Finishes work on time			
Work is always neat			
Accepts responsibility			
Uses time well			
Attitude toward work			

SUBJECT EVALUATION

Reading and Literature			
Spelling			
Language			
Penmanship			
Arithmetic			
Social Studies			
Science			
Handcraft work			

SPECIAL TEST RESULTS

REMARKS

PUPIL PROGRESS CARD

A Pupil Progress Card was given at the end of the year as a record and for placement and attendance for the Junior High School. (The illustration below shows the card used by the teacher.)

NAME OF PUPIL:_____ _____is hereby promoted to the Seventh grade (Advanced group).

SUBJECTS:

Reading_____

Writing_____

Spelling_____

English_____

Social Studies_____

Science_____

Arithmetic_____

_____
Teacher

_____
Principal

June 1, 1962

REMARKS:

SPECIAL ACTIVITIES: